



# YOUTH AND LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION: A CRITICAL REVIEW

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## **Abstract**

Education occupies a strategic position in India's development priorities. United Nations Organisation (UNO) focused on Sustainable Development Goals (2017), amongst the 17 goals aimed by UNO, education occupied 4<sup>th</sup> place in SDG, those are "By 2030, to ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes". In addition to acquire education, the students' horizontal development and national development in four dimensions (Physically, Emotionally, Socially and Spiritually). The first initiative of the Life Skills approach to education was embedded in 'Basic Education program' (1937-61) or the Wardha Scheme of Education, to enable learners to be a matured ones to face life situations and be useful for the society to go forward in all areas (Personal development, Human development, Economic development and social development –SAGY, Government of India(2014)). Life skills lesson may start with a teacher exploring with the students what their ideas or knowledge is about a particular situation in which a life skill can be used. The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (1986) recognized life skills for improving health of the children. The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) linked life skills to education as education is the only way of teaching and training something to someone. Many studies identified and found that youngsters lack the ability to seek the support and reinforce the life skills, because of traditional mechanisms (i.e. family and cultural factors) for inculcating life skills, the media influence and effects of growing up of cultural and ethnic diversity. Also the expectations of individuals and their parents' expectations don't match (WHO, 1997). Many students (Youth) are unable to utilize their potential to the maximum extent due to various reasons. The cut-throat competition, unemployment, lack of job security, external pressures (parents' aspirations, criticisms from others, neighbors) are some of the major concerns for the educated and as a result, they are caught in the mad race (Prajapati, Sharma,B., Sharma,D., 2017). Some of the youngsters were unable get proper training and foundations. The program of Life Skills Education is for the promotion of health and well being of all children(CBSE). The teaching of Life Skills helps to prevent anti social activities and behavior like substance abuse etc. (Botvin et.al. 1984, Penz,1983). Present paper focuses on the importance of life skills education and the benefits of imparting life skill education among students to enable their potentials within the lines of Critical Pedagogy.

**Keywords:** *Life Skills Education, Development, Aspirations*

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## INTRODUCTION

Education occupies a strategic position in India's development priorities. United Nations Organisation (UNO) focused on Millennium Development Goals till 2016 and from 2017 onwards UNO focused on Sustainable Development Goals, amongst the 17 goals aimed by UNO, education occupied 4<sup>th</sup> place in SDG, those are “By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes.

### Conceptual Background

The term Life Skills Education, is being widely used presently but it is often used interchangeably with livelihood skills. But the two are different. Livelihoods skills as the name suggests, are skills, related to generate income to fulfil one's household/individual economic goals (Ruchismita, 2017).

Life skills education is a requisite component of promoting healthy and socially accepted individuals. Life Skills based education is essential to enable an individual to cope with difficulties in day-to-day life by learning to make informed decisions, solving problems, thinking creatively and critically, building healthy relationships through effective communication and further deal with risk situations. The specialization is well designed to introduce the student to the concept of Life Skills, Skills required to handle psycho-socio problems of youth and adolescent care and counselling.

To deal with life pressures and achieving personal and social skills are always part of the reality of human life and manifests in various forms in different periods. Unfortunately, humans are not always in the normal psychosocial development direction and for various reasons, many young people cannot receive external stimuli and cannot balance between the effects of these incentives and inner motivations and consequently harmonious and comprehensive development which is the main purpose of human balance in full or even partial is not fulfilled. So, the more complex a society and the broader interpersonal and social information, there will be more internal and environmental conflicts which consequently cause more perplexity and confusion (Khoshabi et.al, 2011, p.24).

### Definition of life skills

Life skills have been defined as “the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life” (WHO, as cited in CBSE). ‘Adaptive’ means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances. ‘Positive behaviour’ implies that a person is forward looking and even in difficult situations, can find a ray of hope and opportunities to find solutions. The terms ‘Livelihood skills’ or occupational/vocational skills refer to capabilities, resources and opportunities to pursue individual and household economic goals and relate to income generation. Thus, Life skills are distinct from livelihood skills.

### Definition of Youth:

“Youth” is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence and awareness of our interdependence as members of a community. Youth is a more fluid category than a fixed age-group(UNESCO). “youth” means “every person between the ages of 15 and 35 years”.

### Key Life Skills

**The Ten Core Life Skills as laid down by WHO are:** They are categorised by in two domains, they are

**Affective Life Skills:** Affective life skills consisting of four life skills such as: Coping with stress, Empathy, Interpersonal relationship and Coping with emotions.

**Cognitive Life Skills:** Cognitive life skills consisting of six life skills such as: Self-awareness, Critical thinking, Decision making, Effective communication, Creative thinking and Problem solving.

### Life Skills Education in India:

Life Skills Education (LSE) programme took off in India, in the community mental health unit of the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore under the guidance of Dr. R. Parthasarathy, Professor, Department of Psychiatric Social Work. He had developed a ‘student enrichment programme’ [Vranda and Rao 2011] which encompassed the 10 skills listed by WHO in 1993. Hence, he is the father of LSE programmes in India.

### Theories of Life Skills Education

The foundation on which the life skills approach is developed is drawn from various theories that have positively contributed to the growth and enrichment of LSE. Social learning theory [Bandura 1977] is prominent among them. The other theories include child and adolescent development theory, cognitive problem solving theory, social influence theory, multiple intelligences theory, problem behaviour theory and risk and resilience theory. [Mangrulkar et al. 2001] From a cognitive behavioural viewpoint, the perception is that life skills are skills that are learned and a person can be made conscious of its importance through training.

### Aim of the study:

The aim of this paper is to find what behaviour development approach addresses the knowledge, attitudes and value enhanced Life Skills for Youth.

### Why Youth Need Life Skills Education

Youth can make a great extent of contribution to society if they are given proper support and space through handholding and informed interaction. They are the most productive force of any country as they do have unlimited energy, vitality and idealism, as well as a strong urge to experiment and create a better world.

In his book Lead India 2020: “A Vision for the New Millennium A.P.J. Abdul Kalam says, developed India by 2020, or even earlier, is not a dream. It is a mission we can all take up and succeed. Following the UNDP lead of putting people at the centre of the development and keeping in perspective that 54% of our population is youth” (see <http://leadindia2020.org/about-us/>). By igniting and channelizing the hidden potential in youth, our nation will be a source of man power and intellectuals. For this reason, Youth has to be imparted the “Life Skills” .

### Research evidence for Life Skills Education Training:

#### Life Skills and Role of Parents:

Family/home is the first school for every child. Nurturing and imparting the life skills begin from child hood onwards. Deficit in skills or lack of skills necessitates training. Skill building should begin in the family. It is the responsibility of the parents to get their children involve in family related activities so as to strengthen life skills. Given below are few examples of such activities that can strengthen life skills in children and adolescents.[Parthasarathy et al. 2009].

Those are: **Deciding** the menu to be prepared every day/special occasion/festivals/birthdays, looking after the household chores in the absence of elders at home, **Planning** the holiday activities, **Actively** involving the children/adolescents when the financial or personal constraints occur, **When** too many guests arrive, assisting in sharing the responsibilities, **When** a family member becomes sick, takes up the role of that person, **Interior** decoration/arrangement of the articles in the house as a routine as well as during functions, **Interacting**/communicating with other family members based on the prevailing family situation, **Understanding** the behaviour dynamics of parents and siblings and adjusting with them, **Developing** and maintaining verbal communication with family members, visitors, relatives, neighbours, friends, guests and others,



**Reading** newspapers/story books and sharing the same with family members, **Going** for picnics, visiting relatives, attending ceremonies, **Working** together during family function, **Encouraging** introspection, **Rewarding** and punishing for their, positive/negative behaviour, **Looking** after the sick family members, **Helping** the elderly family members, **Facing** sorrowful events as well as happy, events in the family, **Identifying** and following some of the righteous and reputed family members as role model, **Learns** to adopt the effective stress coping styles of significant family member, **Division** of labour at home.

All the above examples are applies to youth, when they are about to take a decision in the choosing the jobs/ course of study to be join which make keep them in good place. If they haven't been given such training/ they haven't have such exposure how to choose a career, right course their life will be in miser.

### Critical Pedagogy and Youth:

Young mind is being considered, as the most productive members of the society, due to their physical and intellectual capability. But in real scenario, most of them are unable to utilize their potential in an appropriate way due to lack of guidance and motivation. Social problems like alcoholism, drug abuse, sexual abuse, smoking, juvenile delinquency, anti-social acts, etc. have an adverse effect on them and others too, to a large extent.

Critical Pedagogy provides a way of seeing an unjust social order and revealing how this injustice has caused problems in the lives of young people who live in impoverished conditions..

“Freire (1970) referred to this educative process as liberatory action or praxis. He argued that people need to engage in a praxis that incorporates theory, action, and reflection as a means to work toward social change and justice, and he devised a literacy program based on this ideal as well as the practical needs of his students” (Breuing, 2011, p.5). Friere felt that teaching is not merely about teaching students to learn a certain object of knowledge, but was also a process of allowing students to learn to learn and to think about the object of knowledge (Balagopalan, 2011).

To understand the good and evil through the education, the acquired knwoledge should help, such type of knwoledge will be acquired through the lines of Critical Pedagogy. It will create a rational thought and discriminative power in the system of education and society, what is my part in the process of teaching and learning proces and development of the society. The questioning mind will enhance in youth with the help of Critical Pedagogy.

In this Smart phone era, many youth are spending time in Smartphone operating, even though they are not master at using Smart phones, but in the case of empowering themselves by inculcating the life skills youth are not showing much interest.

The Draft National Education Policy, 2016” (MHRD 2016b) proposes to replace education with “employable skills” tailored for the global market. The new concept of Make in India, other skill India programs have not created a potential platform to Youth as a better employable person (who are in remote areas). Even though there are many advertisements, huge publicity is taking place. Youngsters lack the ability to seek the support from various skill training programs conducted by various organisations. Few youngsters are feeling ashamed to do miniature jobs after their graduation (Like auto driving, carpentry, rod bending, municipality worker, etc.) but they are happily participating in no use works for their life, those are participating in rallies of a political party for a packet of lemon rice and one bear bottle. They will do all nuances by spending their valuable time in rallies, canvases, agitations of no use for their future life; they are simply used as a fishing worm.

*Popular discourses of youth include the dominant representation of youth as ‘troubled’ or ‘troubling’ (Griffin, 2001) in terms of social problems such as drug abuse, crime, teenage pregnancy, truancy, sexuality, racial and ethnic relations, and sometimes spirituality and religion (Griffin, 2001; White and Wyn, 2004).*

*If the youth are taught the Life Skills the productivity could see instantly or later days; one real life incident is illustrated below:*

## An illustration on Life Skills:

Let me narrate a story of an adolescent named Ashok. He is a 17 year old boy studying Intermediate. His board exam begins today and he is getting ready to go to write the exams. He is sure that he is well prepared and is confident about passing the exam with good grades. When he was about to leave for school, his mother told that she would accompany him as she is going to the market on the way to the school. Mother asked Ashok to wait for five minutes so that she can have a quick bath. Ashok saw his mother moving into the bathroom and suddenly he heard a loud sound and the screaming of his mother.

He ran into the bathroom and saw his mother lying down, unable to move her leg indicating a fracture. He lifted her slowly and supported her to a chair in the next room. Ashok's father and elder brother are away at their work sites. Except the two, there is no one at home. Time is already nine and exam would begin at 9:30 A.M. What will Ashok do now? He is in a challenging situation where he has to attend the exam, has to deal with the mother's accident, get her hospitalized and none of the other immediate family members was available near him. Normally, an adolescent of the age of Ashok may get anxious and frightened in that situation. Ashok, however, handled the situation brilliantly. He immediately called his uncle who was few meters away from his house over phone and informed about the accident. Uncle informed him that he will be at their home in few minutes. Next, he called the college principal, informed him about the situation and told him that he'll be little late. He then informed his elder brother and asked him to come to the hospital. Meanwhile his uncle and aunty came with a car and took his mother to the hospital. Ashok told uncle that he has to give the exam and asked him to drop him at the school on the way.

He consoled his mother in the car and told her that everything will be alright. He told his uncle that his father and brother are on the way to the hospital and he'll also be there after the exam. Ashok had managed the challenging situation well because he was aware of his "life skills" and to use it appropriately.

If we look back at the case of Ashok we can see that he was able to use all these 10 skills in the real life situation.

## Discussion and Conclusion

A relevant and proper implementation of life skill education is a need of an hour, for today's society. Imparting life skills education to the youth can be helpful as it specifically addresses the needs of youth, helps in motivating, providing practical, cognitive, emotional, social and self-management skills for life adjustments. It will help them to think rationally, promote questioning mind when needed to face the problematic situation.

Yadav P, Iqbal N(2009)in their study, it is found that positive results have seen of imparting life skills education to students and bringing the change in adolescent's attitude, thought and behaviour by providing supportive environment to them.

Errecart et al., (1991) and Caplan et al., (1992) identified that life skills education proves to be an effective approach in primary prevention education, as its more interactive, uses problem solving approach and is activities based. Hence, teacher and the taught both involve in learn and fun too.

On the whole, life skills education have found to be an effective psychosocial intervention strategy for promoting positive social, and mental health of adolescents which plays a vital role in all aspects such as strengthening coping strategies and developing self-confidence and emotional intelligence, as well as enhancing critical thinking, problem solving and decision making skills as has been well documented in the aforementioned studies.

Thus, there is, significance and importance of life skills education to be integrated into the regular school curriculum and given on a daily basis by a life skills trainer/ teacher/counsellor to enhance the mental health of students, equip them with better adapted skills to face the challenges of changing life situations and empower them to become fully functioning contributors to the host society in particular and the world in general.

In the light of above discussion, it could be concluded, that, Life skill education has its importance and significance in overall development of youth to become a good citizen and well place. Further Implications: Albeit considerable progress has been made in the past decade, and in the present study too, to reflect, life skills education, as an effective mode of education, which does enhance social, emotional and thinking skills, and helps the 21<sup>st</sup> - century youngsters to achieve their goals, by strengthening their abilities to meet the needs and demands of the present society and be successful in life. A study can be taken up on the life skills education with respect to Youth aspirations and career choices.

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